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SUBJECT: A CALM WEEKEND IN CONAKRY, SMALL-SCALE PROTESTS
POSSIBLE TODAY

¶1. (U) Guinea was calm over the weekend, with no reports of disturbances in Conakry or the interior. Many people in Conakry took advantage of the relative calm to restock on food items and other necessary goods, though economic and social activity was more subdued than usual.

GAS SHORTAGES

¶2. (U) Gas shortages continue to affect the country's transportation and business infrastructure. Hundreds of cars queued at Conakry's gas stations this weekend, in anticipation of fuel deliveries that never came. The security contractor for a mining interest noted that Total and Shell, the two gas companies in Guinea, contract to Guinean trucking companies owned by Peuhl (Fulani) businessmen. Many of these operators have chosen to withhold gas deliveries as a form of protest.

¶3. (U) Bechtel, an American engineering and construction firm, decided to temporarily evacuate some staff at the Guinea Alumina mine due to the country's gas situation. Bechtel officials said on Saturday that they plan on keeping their leadership at the construction site, but will be sending most of their technical staff out of the country today. Many of the country's mining companies have temporarily seized operations since September 28, and are reportedly struggling to maintain sufficient fuel levels for operation.

¶4. (U) Internal transportation is becoming increasingly difficult for average Guineans, making commodity prices spike and fresh produce difficult to obtain in Conakry. The city's large markets remained shuttered this weekend. Several business people reported that their suppliers in the interior are unable to deliver products to the city due to both the fuel shortages and their fear of increasing make-shift check points run by the military. Excess stocks in the interior are reportedly laying to waste -- awaiting delivery to Conakry and surrounding populations.

MISSING BODIES

¶5. (U) Embassy received reports over the weekend that some 14 dead bodies washed up onto Guinea's shores near its border

with Sierra Leone. Although these reports have not yet been verified, the stories are adding to Guinean anger over missing victims of the September 28 attacks. Several contacts have expressed their grave concern over these reports and noted that such stories are aggravating the already tense situation.

ECOWAS NEGOTIATOR

¶16. (SBU) On Saturday, ECOWAS chose Burkinabe President Blaise Campaore to act as mediator between the CNDD and the Force Vives. Several members of the Forces Vives noted that they are not interested in further discussions with the CNDD. They also believe that the nomination of Campaore, who himself took power in a military coup, may send the wrong message to Dadis. They agreed to hold a private meeting with Campaore today at 3pm to discuss their demands and decide whether they will accept his nomination. Sources within the Forces Vives say that they expect that Campaore will be rejected by the group. DAS William Fitzgerald and Charge Kent Brokenshire are scheduled to meet with the Forces Vives at 1200 today. They will also join the local contact group in a meeting with Campaore at 1430.

POSSIBLE PROTESTS

¶17. (SBU) Embassy received reports that several youth groups plan to stage a series of protests today starting around 9am. Apparently the youth groups from the Matoto neighborhood are disappointed that they did not organize a formidable protest at the end of last week. As such, they plan to use today to show their solidarity with the youth groups in other neighborhoods.

¶18. (SBU) Family members of victims of the September 28 attacks are planning to march on Camp Alpha Yaya to demand the return of missing bodies. They will reportedly be joined by several women's groups protesting the violation of women at the stadium last Monday. (COMMENT: The Embassy received several reports of such marches last week, many of which were easily dispersed by police well before getting to the camp. END COMMENT) Though there are still rumors of a general strike, no organized order from the unions has been issued.

¶19. (SBU) COMMENT: Though Conakry remains tense, no large-scale protests are yet planned for the week. The outcome of the Force Vives' meeting with Campaore will most likely set the tone for any possible demonstrations later this week. Even if there is no organized movement, the gas shortage could cause a de facto strike throughout the country.
BROKENSIRE